

From the Field

Welfare Services Ernakulam, Ponnurunni, Kerala

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Introduction

Promoted by the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Welfare Services Ernakulam (WSE) is a registered charitable organisation under the ‘Travancore Cochin Literary Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration act, 1955’. It is also known as Sahrudaya. It has 50 years of experience in rural development and community mobilisation. It plays a very significant role in the development process and more than 100,000 families are directly linked with Sahrudaya. WSE operates mainly in the five civil districts of Kottayam, Alleppey, Ernakulam, Idukki and Thrissur in the state of Kerala. Its programmes and activities include community organisation and community development, sustainable environment, the use of non-conventional energy and watershed development activities. The patrons are His Beatitude George Cardinal Alencherry (Major Archbishop of the Syrian Catholic Church, Kerala) and Bishop Sebastian Adayanthrath (President - Welfare Services Ernakulam and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese).

WSE has an excellent and proven track record of functioning and collaborating with central and state governments, national and international donor agencies, institutions and NGOs for more than five decades. The programmes are managed by teams of volunteers, professionals and experts from different fields. The noble vision of WSE is the “formation of a just society based on human values.” The mission is to promote activities, programmes and institutions with the objective of building up and enhancing the capacities of individuals in particular and communities at large such that they contribute positively and creatively to the establishment

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of a just and humane society. The total staff strength is 120 at the central, regional and field levels. The community SHG animators and community workers involve 347 and 20 people respectively. There are 280 village federations and 225 promoters in WSE.

Objectives

The programmes and activities of the organisation are centred on the following objectives:

- To facilitate the empowerment and integrated development of weaker and vulnerable groups in the society.
- To facilitate the infrastructure development of the poor and shelterless through habitat development.
- To facilitate the capacity building of the poor and the marginalised in the society for generating sustainable sources of income.
- To facilitate sustainable management of the natural resources, especially of land, water and bio-mass.
- To promote sustainable, eco-friendly and appropriate rural technologies amongst the poor.
- To promote and establish networking and resource sharing amongst the stakeholders and actors in development.
- To rehabilitate the victims of natural and man-made calamities and to rehabilitate the differentially abled.

Major Departments

- Human and Institution Development
- WESCO Credit
- Social Security Programmes (Micro Insurance)
- Livelihood Development (Micro Enterprises)
- Agriculture and Natural Resource Management
- Environment and Rural Technology Applications
- Family Development Programmes
- Habitat Development and Environmental Sanitation
- Community Health Programmes
- Community Based Rehabilitation Programmes
- Special Projects: CMDRR, Watershed Development and Jananidhi
- Charity and Jeevakarunya Programmes
- Sneha Foundation
- Production Units: Sahrudaya Silk, Meat, Compost and Honey

- Institutions: Sneha, Naivedya, Soukysadan, Banana Village
- Research and Documentation
- Finance Department

Major Programmes

Human resource development programme

In order to fulfil the concept of social transformation, several capacity building programmes have been organised by WSE for functionaries, personnel and volunteers. These ensure the updating of personnel about changes in the sector and keeps them abreast with challenges, knowledge and skills.

WESCO credit

This is the financial intermediary division of WSE for extending financial services to the members of Sahrudaya self-help groups promoted by the organisation. It serves as the flagship programme of WSE for promoting stable institutions of the poor, particularly women, and enabling these institutions to provide a range of financial services, social security and livelihood services. The major activities of WESCO Credit are SHG formations, credit disbursement as loans for productive and domestic works, empowerment, skills development amongst women to facilitate self-enterprises. The five pillars of the SHG formation are knowledge, leadership, fellowship, value dissemination and economic empowerment. These operate as pulling factors even in the metropolitan cities.

Promotion of community based organisations

There are 55 Micro Credit Unions, 85 farmers groups, 212 children's clubs and 6598 SHGs. These evolved as the foundation stones of a social transformation process initiated by WSE. The organisation has a direct link with above one lakh families within its operational area.

Habitat development and sanitation programme

Over 28,000 low cost houses have been completed, and 16,000 families were supported for the renovation of their existing houses. Other activities under the department are the promotion of smokeless improved *Chula* (ovens) for the individual households and community *Chulas* as part of

energy conservation practices. As part of enhancing sanitation facilities available to poor people, the department had been able to construct more 22,000 sanitary latrines.

Entrepreneurship and livelihood development programme

More than 18,000 individuals have been trained and helped to start small scale ventures for income generation. These include petty shops, coir making units, garment making, bakery units, goat rearing, poultry, cement brick making, auto rickshaws, duck rearing, rice and flour mills and group farming. In addition, employment opportunities are provided to the local poor through a coir spooling unit, a silk cloth manufacturing unit and a rabbit processing unit. These units enable the families to receive a regular income of Rs.4,500-6,000 per month for each beneficiary. It has served as regular additional income to the families and thus manages their increasing requirements. This programme thus involves an orientation on the need of microenterprises, skills training in entrepreneurial activities, and the promotion of micro enterprises through departments, exhibitions and of marketing through networks.

Environment and rural technology applications

WSE gives precedence to addressing environmental issues and improving the environment through the collective efforts of individuals, families and institutions. The major activities promoted by the organisation are to encourage people and communities to make use of alternative sources of energy and to conserve biodiversity. Awareness creation programmes, sensitisation campaigns, publications and exhibitions, model creation, linkages and collaborations are part of this initiative. As a result, 28,500 biogas plants and 22,000 smokeless *chulahs* have been installed in rural areas. In addition, the distribution of solar power systems and the promotion of rainwater harvesting structures were also undertaken by WSE.

Community health and rehabilitation programme

WSE is active with community health programmes in 150 of the rural villages in its operational area. Both institutional and community based rehabilitation activities are carried out for the disabled, the aged and victims of natural and manmade calamities. Medical camps are periodically organised for the detection of disabilities, diabetes, cataracts and TB in collaboration with various medical institutions.

Family development programme

There are poor families who lack basic amenities and have poor access to resources. WSE extends support to 1,245 poor families through the 'Save A Family Plan' on a monthly basis for periods of 5-6 years as they are identified from the different regions served by the organisation. It aims to help poor families with direct assistance for leading a self-reliant life through a family-to-family support programme.

Educational support service

This is envisaged as supporting poor young people coming from economically limited families, enabling them to meet their higher education expenses through educational scholarships and financial advances.

Ecology and environment

Besides the promotion of sustainable agriculture practices, WSE has implemented solid waste management:

- Using terracotta-based vermi composting, watershed development programme, Palakkad (the strengthening of village watershed committees, the training of watershed development committee members, treatment of by the like construction of contour bunds, trenches, vegetable fencing, stone *kayyalas*, agronomic measure and livelihood development programmes).
- Environment management (environment education, sensitisation events, rallies, workshops and other action-oriented programmes with the participation of the community).
- *Harithajeevan* (a kaleidoscopic initiative to rejuvenate the ecosystem which includes Environment Sunday through parishes, resource team formation for this purpose, awareness classes, installation programmes of terracotta and competitions and awards).

Jalanidhi, watershed and NRM projects

The Jalanidhi drinking water and sanitation project supported by the Kerala government is facilitated by WSE in Kuttuppuram Grama Panchayath. WSE is the support organisation for the implementation of the World Bank-supported Jalanidhi project which is coordinated at the state level by KRWSA (Kerala Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency).

Disaster management programme

In order to respond to the needs of the people during disasters and calamities, a department has been formed and is actively involved in disaster mitigation activities.

Social security programmes

The number of people seeking financial support to meet their expenses has increased and this has led to implementation of different life and mediclaim insurance programmes by the organisation. These insurance programmes provide the poor with insurance coverage against medical expenses and loss of life. These programmes have been implemented in past years and in the current year many have benefitted from these programmes. The main insurance policies are the Sahrudaya Arogya Suraksha Scheme, the JeevanMadhur Insurance Scheme and the VidyarthiSuraksha Insurance Scheme.

Jeevakarunyanidhi (charity programmes)

WSE gives prime importance to the most vulnerable sections of society as organised social work does not reach this specific group of people in our society. 'JeevaKarunyaNidhi' is designed to extend assistance to those who live in the most reduced circumstances. Funds are provided to people in this section of the society, enabling them to meet the adversities of life, and hundreds are supported through this programme.

Sneha foundation

Another programme implemented exclusively with the local fund is the Sneha Foundation. The programme was started in 2011 and so far more than 150 generous sponsors are contributing to the programme. The fund, mobilised through voluntary contributions of the sponsors, is utilised to support genuine beneficiaries enabling them to meet their exigencies.

Sahrudayafood and agri fests

WSE conducted the fests at seven places and approximately 60,000 people participated, with many farmers benefitting from it. The objectives were:

- To enhance the knowledge and interest of farmers and the community at large through the introduction of new concepts, innovations, farm equipment and machinery.

- To create a platform for small farmers and entrepreneurs to exhibit and sell their products and create understanding about market potential.
- To encourage organic and sustainable practices by the people and especially by farmers.
- To popularise and create awareness about the health benefits of organic farming, organic foods among the consumers and among various sections of the people, including the youth.
- To conscientise the public on food security and food safety aspects.

Other areas of intervention

- WSE undertakes the Asakiranam Cancer Care project with the support of the Caritas India. This project involves health surveys, awareness generation classes to village and schools, the setting up of medical camps, treatment and rehabilitation, counselling services, *santhwanam* palliative care and promotion of prevention methods (such as fostering organic and homestead farming, the fight against the fast food culture and environment education).
- The Kerala Labour Movement is another area of intervention where WSE is working among and with the organised and unorganised sector. Pallippuram has witnessed its effective involvement in organising labourers.
- The programme of *Gramotsavom* is an idea of creating parish-wise rural markets where products can be sold locally. This was successfully completed in 50 places before the valedictory celebrations of the golden jubilee and had the high appreciation from the people of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese.
- WSE has SahrudayaSparshan Melodies, a music group composed of persons with disabilities (15 member teams) and the stage programme includes *Ganamela*, a magic show and skits.
- The SahrudayaAgri Nursery and Poly House is a demonstration as well as a model for organic and homestead farming at the central office, Ponnuruni.
- There is a free housing arrangement at Pattimattom known as *KarunyaVilla* inhabited by the homeless people in and around Ernakulam.
- *Prabhodhini* is a life skills development programme for adolescents. They are the children of the members of SHGs and animators of WSE.

- The Sneha mental health programme involves the distribution of free medicine and counselling to families and mentally affected children.
- WSE also provides the Sahrudaya Agro Award to innovative farmers for their contribution to the society.
- The programme of *Muttagramampaddhathi* facilitated awareness generation classes in 50 villages and 180 people joined this programme. The scale of collecting eggs is done by private partners and attracted people to take up this programme.
- The setting up of a family action team in each parish as an empowerment group to support poor families under the leadership of parish priests.
- Documentation and publishing are done accurately such that its operations have been recorded intact. The magazine *Jalakamis* the outcome of this department which has high impact on its followers and provides insights into the appraisal of activities of WSE.
- Live laboratories for students of social work.

Sahrudayaproduction units

In order to promote and demonstrate viable rural industries, the production units function under the society. These are:

- Sahrudaya Silk Production Unit: In the silk production unit 16 women are employed and 260 women are trained. Here they produce beautiful silk materials at very affordable prices.
- Sahrudaya Meat Production Unit: 2,800 families are involved in the decentralised rabbitry development programme. The unit produces nutritious, cholesterol free rabbit meat, which is good for heart patients.
- Sahrudaya Honey Processing Unit: Raw honey is processed and marketed through this unit. The unit has Agmark registration and provided employment to 50 women.
- SahrudayaVermi Composting Unit: solid waste management is a big problem today. Three large scale units are functioning for demonstrating and promoting income generating activities linked to waste management.

Sahrudaya institutions

- SoukyaSadana (a home for the aged). This is a centre which started in 1993. The old age home has received financial support from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment since 1994. SoukyaSadana houses 50 aged people who are destitute and they are provided with personal

care and medical services. The main activities of the centre include a mobile medicare unit, day care facilities, dispensary, counseling and care for the inmates. The home also provides care to the elderly in the village named Chethicode.

- **Naivedya Ayurvedic Hospital and Research Centre:** The Ayurveda hospital is a Green Leaf certified centre of excellence in Ayurveda, where all treatments are carried out after scientific diagnosis and supervision. It has 20-bedded inpatient treatment facilities and offers different health care packages to suit the customer's demands and needs.
- **Sneha Basic Facility Centres, Edakkunnu and PARUR:** The basic facility, established with the support of SLF in the Netherlands, functions well and the centre is attended regularly by nearly 50 children with disabilities. Two therapists and other support staff are involved in providing services to CwDs. The services provided include physiotherapy, audio-therapy and speech therapies with the support of aids and equipment in a systematic way.
- **Banana Village:** The innovative Banana Village concept is located at Parambayam, Angamaly. The construction of the training centre in the village is completed. The reclamation of the land and the planting of different varieties of bananas, setting up a demonstration unit and an agriculture nursery are progressing.

Table 1: Major community structures promoted by WSE

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Year of starting</i>	<i>Groups formed</i>	<i>No. of villages of people</i>	<i>Total coverage</i>
Formation of Self Help Groups	2001	6598	273	73,745 families
Micro-Credit Cooperatives	1990	55	31	5,625 families
Women's Welfare Centres	1965	247	247	12,350 women
SHGs of Persons with disabilities	2004	107	23	1,350 families
Farmers Clubs	2003	85	33	1,300 farmers
Care and Support Homes	1995	5		87 inmates
Production units	1991-92	5		61 people
Children's Groups	2003	212	43	2,100 children
Community Vigilance Groups	2006	10	2	70
BalaPanchayath	2007	2	2	30

Sahrudaya branches

The organisation has six regional offices to cater to the needs of the people and to ensure a decentralised process of development. They are:

- Sahrudaya Regional Office, Angamaly.
- Sahrudaya Regional Office, Kalady.
- Sahrudaya Regional Office, Vaikom.
- Sahrudaya Regional Office, Ponnurunni, Ernakulam.
- Sahrudaya Regional Office, Parur.
- Sahrudaya Regional Office, Cherthala.

Major achievements

- Facilitated the formation of 6,600 SHGs, 80 Credit Unions, 102 SHGs of persons with disabilities and 40 farm clubs in its 280 operational villages within five civil districts of Kerala State.
- Intervened in five civil districts of Kerala State bringing changes to the lives of 73,740 families directly through community platforms of self-help groups.
- Assisted 22,300 families for constructing cost effective and stable houses.
- 33,000 families have been supported for small scale economic activities and enhanced their livelihood opportunities.
- 1,500 poor families are now regularly supported under the Family Development Programme with a monthly assistance of Rs. 950 for a period of five years. During the past 50 years, more than 19,700 poor families were supported.
- More than 1,200 poor families are supported under the Family Development Programme.
- Constructed 32,000 biogas plants and 29,000 smokeless *chulas* as part of improving the environment and the promotion of alternative energy sources.
- Skills training has been imparted to 4,500 women in the coir sector.
- More than 6,000 families are being supported under the decentralised rabbitry programme.
- 1,000 poor children are being supported under the Educational Sponsorship programme.
- More than 18,000 families were imparted with entrepreneurship development training under various schemes.

- 400 persons with mental illness and more than 1,400 children with disabilities are supported under community based rehabilitation programmes.
- 6,000 poor women were provided with tailoring machines on a subsidized rate.
- More than Rs. 1,800 million is distributed to 142,500 members of SHGs affiliated to Welfare Services Ernakulam.
- Constructed more than 9,000 Roof Water Harvesting Tanks for people, agencies and institutions affected by the scarcity of potable water.
- Solar power systems were distributed to more than 4,750 families as part of the propagation of non-conventional energy applications.
- Yearly 750 families are supported under a Charity Scheme for housing, treatment, marriage, education of children and livelihood development.
- Fifty destitute people are housed in the Old Age Home supported by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. 250 persons have so far been provided with shelter through this home.
- Insurance coverage is provided to more than 50,000 people yearly and more than 80,000 people received assistance and benefits in five years through various schemes.
- The Cardinalnagar Housing Project of WSE had been a model for the LakshamVeedu project of the Government of Kerala.
- PDDP evolution had its origin in the WSE self-employment programme.
- Collaborated with government to promote the DeenBandhu Model biogas plant in Kerala (as it is one of the programmes of the 20-point programmes of Indira Gandhi) in the Cochin Corporation.
- The initial impetus of decentralised household segregation of waste management of the Cochin Corporation and training was imparted by WSE

Ongoing Major Programmes

- Family Development Programme with Save A Family Plan India.
- Jalanidhi project at Kuttipuram supported by the World Bank.
- Integrated Agriculture Development under Western Ghat at Thatchanattukara.
- Cancer Care and Prevention programme supported by Caritas India.

- Family Farming Programme.
- Rehabilitation of persons with disabilities by CBM and SLF.
- Revised National Tuberculosis control programme by the Kerala Government.
- Parish markets where people can sell and buy quality products.
- Ayurveda treatment 24 hours and promotion of Naivedya hospital products such as dantadavanachooram, chembarathithatli, kasthurimanjal, nellickapodi, thrifalachoornam, cheevackapodi, dahasamani, pramehadahasamani, vengakathal, mylanjipodi and multanimitti.
- Children's wing empowerment programmes.
- Discover ability: a job fair for mobile people with the support of the social justice department of Kerala State.

Conclusion

As a faith-based community agency, WSE is based purely on religious principles echoing a humanitarian ethos and social work values. The strength of WSE lies in the process of 'appreciative inquiry' built into its approach over the last few decades. This process is continued at more frequent intervals, which helps us to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the community. The various programmes implemented by the organisation are its sincere efforts to translate its vision into reality. Taken together, these constitute powerful drivers that enable this organisation to create enduring values for all stakeholders, contributing meaningfully to its clarion call of empowering, sustaining, enabling and educating the society as whole.

WSE has had a remarkable impact on the human face of the community with its uniqueness, accountability to people, social entrepreneurship, pooling of resources, organisational structure, long term and short term cooperation and fund raising. The regular innovative dissemination of methods and appropriate interventions significantly maintained its credibility in the community. At the same time, WSE is on a trajectory to make it more relevant and meaningful in fast growing city life as well as adding more meaning to poor and vulnerable sections of society.